

NEARTOWN LITTLE LEAGUE

GUIDE FOR MANAGERS AND COACHES

Congratulations on signing up to manage a Neartown Little League (NLL) team. The Board of Directors and the NLL families appreciate your dedication and commitment to the league and the kids that you will have the privilege of coaching. This guide is provided as a tool to help you be successful at NLL. As a leader with NLL, we ask that you follow the Little League Pledge:

- **I will teach all children to play fair and do their best.**
- **I will positively support all managers, coaches and players.**
- **I will respect the decisions of the umpires.**
- **I will praise a good effort despite the outcome of the game.**

I. MANAGER'S ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

A. MANGER'S CODE OF CONDUCT

1. As the role model for this team, your conduct is to be above reproach. You are responsible for the conduct of the team's coaches, players and parents. If any of these individuals exhibits poor behavior, it is the manager's responsibility to correct that behavior.
2. Managers and coaches should only use constructive coaching. Verbal abuse and/or negative criticism directed toward any player will not be tolerated.
3. During a game, managers, coaches, players and spectators should offer words of encouragement to their own team and refrain from derogatory remarks to the opposing team.
4. Tobacco, alcohol and profanity are not allowed at any League facility.

B. MANAGER'S AND COACHES' ROLE

1. Coaching Procedures –
 - a. Organizes practice sessions, teaches fundamental skills and game strategy suitable to the level of play.
 - b. Takes adequate precautions to prevent accident or injury including maintenance of protective gear.
 - c. Ensures that players do not reach physical and emotional fatigue.
 - d. Knowledgeable of basic first aid and is familiar with all first aid equipment provided by the League and the League Safety Manual.
 - e. Encourages players at every opportunity.
 - f. Instills the desire to win, to improve, to understand team concepts, and to have fun.
 - g. Understands and follows the Rules and Regulations of Little League, plays the game within the spirit and intention of the rules, and instills in players respect for the rules of the game.
 - h. Facilitates equal participation by all players.
 - i. Be consistent in your actions. Treat each player as you would your star player.
 - j. Be prepared and be on time to all games and practices.
2. Develop Desirable Habits in Players –
 - a. Encourage promptness, responsibility and leadership.
 - b. Encourage sportsmanship and fair play at all times by teaching good behavior, including: congratulating opponents after each game; accepting defeat gracefully; and being a gracious winner.
 - c. Instill in players respect for the authority of all adult leaders in the league.
 - d. Develop a good team player. Teach the importance of team play, of encouraging
3. Have Fun and Play Ball
 - a. Little League should be a fun and positive experience for the kids, parents and Coaches.
 - b. It is not about winning, it is about teaching baseball and fostering a love of the game. For the kids, it is about PLAYING!
 - c. Enjoy your team's accomplishments and growth throughout the season.
 - d. Encourage your parents to get involved and help you coach the team.

4. Build Your Knowledge of Baseball
 - a. Take advantage of training offered by the League.
 - b. Ask other coaches and managers for tips
 - c. Be familiar with outside training camps and resources for players: Rice University, University of Houston and Lamar High School all offer baseball training opportunities.
 - d. Utilize the internet and available books and videos for instructional tips

www.littleleague.org

www.baseballtips.com/instruction.html

www.youthbaseballinfo.com

C. MANAGER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Coordinate with the League to arrange team practices and manage game schedules.
2. Communicate with your team to ensure that everyone knows the schedule for practices and games.
3. Participate in all Little League activities and umpire games as required.
4. Participate and encourage support of our fundraising activities. These fundraisers help to defray the equipment, uniform and operational costs of the League that would otherwise be passed on directly to the players through registration.
5. Ensure that all parent volunteers complete the required volunteer form. All adults who help with the children on the field or in the dugout are required to complete a Little League volunteer form. This is a Little League International requirement, and entails a criminal background check. Please ensure that all forms are completed and submitted prior to the first practice.

D. TIPS FOR BEING SUCCESSFUL

1. Communication is the key to the success of your team and e-mail seems to be an effective method of communicating. For good participation and attendance, communication with your team is vital. E-mails will assist greatly in keeping everyone informed so that the players arrive at practices and games on time and ready to play. If you have difficulties getting organized, ask an assistant coach or parent who is good at organization to handle the communication aspect of your role.
2. Line up a good Team Mom or Dad – this will help more than you can imagine in assisting your team. The Team Mom/Dad will handle: distribution of uniforms, Opening and Closing Day activities, pictures, concession duty, candy sales, snacks, Hot Dog & Ice Cream Social fund-raiser, dugout help, and many other important items.
3. Have a plan prior to every practice. Get at least 2 – 4 assistant coaches who will help with the team. Divide the kids up into small groups to practice different skills and rotate the groups.
4. Encourage players to attend every practice and game. There are only a limited number of practices over the course of the season, and they are all important in getting your players ready to play.
5. Have the players on the field and ready to play at game start time.
6. Give at-home assignments to your team between practices to improve their game. Encourage each child to do their home training. This is just like homework and all parents are the second-tier coaches at home. This helps each child improve his/her skills (and the better the child develops the more they will enjoy their Little League experience!).

II. GAMES AND PRACTICES:

A. HOLD A PARENT MEETING AT THE BEGINNING OF YOUR FIRST PRACTICE

1. Immediately after you obtain your team roster, contact all your players and inform them of your first practice. Many managers find it helpful to hold a short meeting with the parents at the first practice to set the expectations of the season. At those meetings you may want to address:
 - a. Your goals for the players;
 - b. Your rules;
 - c. Spring schedule – Important dates to remember;

- d. Attendance at practices;
- e. Recruit a Team Mom or Dad
- f. Parent participation – encourage involvement either in a coaching role, concession duty, field work or umpiring
- g. Logistics:
 - Player drop-off and pick-up, including carpools;
 - Confirm all contact information (e-mail addresses, cell phone numbers, etc.);
 - Obtain all Medical Releases and identify medical conditions;
 - Provide information on required uniforms and equipment; and
 - Provide Volunteer Forms to interested volunteers.
- h. Support of League fundraisers - critical to financial health of League;
- i. Respect for authority of League officials, including umpires; and
- j. Answer any questions parents may have.

B. ENSURE YOU AND THE PLAYERS ARRIVE AT GAMES AND PRACTICES FULLY EQUIPPED

1. Each player needs to be properly dressed and equipped for all practices and games in order to play. Players are not allowed to wear jewelry of any kind during games or practices.
2. Bring all League-provided equipment to each practice and game. The League provides the following equipment:
 - a. Batting helmets;
 - b. Bats; and
 - c. Catcher's gear (including long model chest protector, qualifying facemask and glove).
3. Strongly encourage your players to bring all their equipment--particularly their glove--to practices and games. Extra gloves are not available.
4. Batting helmets are required for batting practice. Base-runners must wear helmets.
5. For practices, players should wear long baseball pants (to avoid skinned knees), baseball cleats (for traction on grass), and baseball caps (to keep the sun out of their eyes).
6. For games, all players are required to wear their Little League-issued uniforms and caps.
7. Shoes with metal cleats are not permitted.
8. Any time a pitcher is warming up, the catcher must wear a mask with a dangling throat protector, long model chest protector and protective cup (males only). No exceptions! At the Minors Division level and above, if the catcher is not available to warm up the pitcher, another player, wearing the proper gear, may warm up the pitcher.
9. Players must learn to drop their bat after hitting the ball. Throwing the bat is dangerous and grounds for ejection. The on-deck position will not be used. Players may not pick up a bat in the dugout.

D. KEEP YOUR PLAYERS HYDRATED!

1. Bring a large cooler of water and disposable cups to every practice and game, or ensure that someone on the team is responsible for bringing them.
2. Please give your players adequate water/drink breaks, especially as the weather gets warmer.
3. Encourage your players to bring water/drink bottles or jugs with them to practice and games.

E. PRE-GAME PREPARATIONS / POST GAME

1. All Teams:
 - a. Prepare the batting line-up card and give to the umpire 5 minutes before the start of the game. The League requires that all teams must use a "continuous batting order" to bat all players, in their respective spot in the batting order on the line up card.
 - b. Provide one game ball (each) to the umpire;
 - c. Designate a Pitch-Count Recorder (Minor and Major Divisions only);
 - d. Post-game - Managers are responsible for removing their equipment and players from the dugout immediately following a game. Managers are required to remove all trash from dugout and field following games and practices.
 - e. Post-game results - The manager of the winning team in each game is required to notify the designated representative of the score within 24 hours after each game. For Major and Minor Divisions teams, each manager must report, within 24 hours after each game,

the Pitch Count recorded in the game. Results will be posted on the League website and Pitch Counts will be compiled for each Division.

2. Home Team:
 - k. Home team will occupy the 1st base dugout
 - l. Prepare the field, including: chalking the field, dragging the infield, setting the bases, turning the lights on, setting up the pitching machine (if necessary), and checking for hazardous field conditions. The umpire will have the final decision as to field preparedness.
 - m. Will operate concessions during the game.
 - n. Determine the scoreboard operator.
3. Visiting Team:
 - a. Visitors will occupy the 3rd base dugout

F. PRE-GAME WARM-UPS

1. The visiting team shall take the field 40 minutes prior to the game for 15 minutes of infield/outfield practice, and the home team shall take the field 20 minutes prior to the game for 15 minutes of infield/outfield practice. If the visiting team is late taking the field, the home team shall still take the field 20 minutes prior to the game. The home plate conference shall take place 5 minutes prior to the game. Batting cages will also be made available to both teams 40 minutes prior to game time (time to be distributed equally).
 - a. In the event the preceding game ends less than 35 minutes prior to the next game, the visiting team shall take the field immediately after the preceding game is completed, and shall take 5 minutes or one-half of the time remaining minus 5 minutes (for the plate conference) until the scheduled game time, whichever is greater. The home team follows with an identical warm-up period.
 - b. EXAMPLE: The preceding game ends at 1:40 and your game is scheduled for 2:00 -- The visiting team takes the field at 1:40 and has 7½ minutes (1:40 to 2:00 is 20 minutes less 5 minutes for plate conference is 15 minutes divided equally). If the preceding game ends at 1:50, each team gets 5 minutes, there is a 5-minute plate conference and the games starts at 2:05.
2. It is the responsibility of the teams, especially for the first game of the day, to start on time. Game time limits begin at the scheduled start time, unless delayed by weather or overrun(s) from prior game(s).
3. Batting practice is not allowed on any game field prior to games. All fields (other than Tee-Ball) have batting cages that may be used by both home and visiting teams.
4. Do not warm-up (play catch) in high-use areas or the infield. Use the outfield and sideline areas beyond the bases.
5. Catchers must wear protective helmet, mask, protective cup (males only) and long-model chest protector during all pitcher warm-ups and game play, whether in bullpen or on the field. All catcher masks must have a dangling throat protector attached.

G. DURING THE GAME

1. Managers, coaches and players must remain in the dugout during the game.
2. Anyone needing to leave the dugout (bathroom) must get permission from the umpire during a dead ball situation.
3. All coaches of the defensive team for all divisions except Tee-Ball shall remain in the dugout while the ball is in play (i.e., not "dead" under the rules) during the team's defensive half-inning.
4. At least one adult must be on the bench or in the dugout at ALL times
5. For the Minor and Major Divisions, one manager and not more than two coaches [three coaches for Machine Pitch], when not actively engaged on the playing field, shall be on the bench or in the dugout.
6. Managers will be held accountable for the language and actions of coaches, players, and team spectators. All violations of League abuse and conduct policies may subject parties involved to ejection from games and League facilities.

7. Umpires shall have the authority to eject anyone for improper conduct. Umpires may suspend play until League officials deal with a disruptive person. If the situation is not resolved, the game may remain suspended until a later date and the Houston Police Department should be contacted.

H. SLIDE RULE / MALICIOUS CONTACT

1. Headfirst slides, while advancing toward a base, are not permitted; the runner is out.
2. A runner is out for failing to slide or attempting to avoid a fielder who has the ball and is waiting to make the tag, if the runner, in the judgment of the umpire, makes unnecessary contact with the fielder (Interference rule).
3. If a fielder is not in possession of the ball and is blocking the base path, this does not give the base runner the right to run over the defensive player. Any base runner who must alter his path to a base or is impeded (slowed down) due to a fielder illegally blocking a base path without the ball cannot be put out (Obstruction rule).
4. Any action by a runner that, in the judgment of the umpire, displays an intent to collide with or "take out" a fielder for the purpose of injuring that player or causing that player to drop the ball, or for any other reason, may, at the discretion of the umpire, result in that runner's ejection from the game. The umpire's decision shall be based on his/her perception of the runner's intent and not on the severity of the collision, if any. When a collision does occur under these circumstances, the ball shall become dead for interference at the time of the collision.
5. The umpire shall be the sole judge as to a runner's intent and whether a collision was avoidable.
6. A collision between a runner and a fielder (not in the possession of the ball or attempting to field a batted ball) which, in the judgment of the umpire, is unavoidable (example – minor contact not hindering the runner), is simply a collision and no penalty shall be assessed.
7. If, in the judgment of the umpire, a fielder initiates malicious contact or displays the intent to commit a malicious act toward a runner, the ball will become dead at that time and that fielder shall be ejected from the game.
8. Any manager or coach heard or seen encouraging his/her players to "run into a player on the other team if he/she is in the base path" or similar instruction will receive a warning, and is subject to ejection; any further similar comments will result in immediate ejection. The respective League Representative and the President shall be made aware of any warnings issued and ejections imposed during the game.

I. UMPIRES - RESPECT THE RULES, THE UMPIRES, AND THE PLAYERS!

1. Home-plate Umpire – "Umpire-in-Chief" – He/she is responsible for the rules and conduct on the playing field, and is also responsible for keeping track of strikes, number of pitches, and any calls at the plate.
2. The umpire-in-chief should converse solely with the manager of either team regarding conduct of players, managers, and parents and/or violation of playing rules.
3. Umpires and managers should at all times minimize conferences that would result in delay of game.
4. There will be no arguing with the umpires or opposing coaches. If there is a dispute, it should be handled professionally between innings or after the game. Arguments with or verbal abuse of umpires will not be tolerated.
5. If a manager believes a rule is violated, the manager must notify the umpire of his/her protest prior to the next pitch regarding the rule in question. The manager shall request "time" for purpose of lodging the protest, wait for the Umpire-in-Charge's call of "Time," produce the Little League rulebook, and specify to the umpire to whom the appeal is being made the specific rule under which the protest is being lodged. If the manager fails to produce the rulebook, specify the rule under which the protest is made, or the next pitch or any play is completed prior to the appeal, the umpire's original decision stands.
6. Questions regarding rules and interpretations are permitted, but arguments over judgment calls are not allowed. Direct or indirect criticism by managers and coaches of umpire judgment calls, including fair/foul, ball/strike, and safe/out is unacceptable.
7. Any and all discussions regarding rules, games or conduct should be handled in a discreet manner away from the presence of players and spectators.

J. GAME CANCELLATION DUE TO INCLEMENT WEATHER

1. Team managers are responsible for and have the authority to determine the playability of a field due to weather conditions up to the time the home team gives its starting lineup to the home plate umpire. Umpires have final responsibility and authority for decisions concerning playing, suspending or terminating play of a game.
2. Managers must make every reasonable attempt to play the game with consideration given to specific weather conditions, time to prepare a field versus darkness and subsequent games, and possible damage to the field.
3. In the event of any game cancellation or postponement, the home team manager is responsible for notifying League personnel, Manager of the Visiting team and the Chief Umpire.
4. Managers shall abide by the League Threatening Weather Policy:
At first sighting of lightning or other severe weather by anyone at the field, the game is temporarily suspended and managers and coaches are responsible to ensure that all players are cleared from the field and placed in cars or covered areas. Game play can be resumed only after 30 minutes have passed without a further sighting of lightning from any person at the field.

L. SCOREBOOKS

Major and Minor divisions are required to keep an accurate scorebook. Managers of both teams are required to keep separate scorebooks subject to Board audit for resolution of issues (i.e., playing time, Pitch Count, and rotation of players). If using separate sheets of paper for scorekeeping, include them in the scorebook. The Home team scorebook shall be the official book.